

THE GOSPEL

1. SALVATION

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Salvation and eternal life are the most vital issues to face all of us. Despite the increase in the rejection of Christianity the majority of sensible people do contemplate their mortality.

What does the word salvation mean?

To save and salvation has to do with deliverance from peril.

To obtain a cure from a doctor one must discuss with him the illness, injury or disease. Sin is like a disease and the salvation of God is the only cure. Sin is sometimes compared in the Bible with leprosy. Sin is a potentially terminal disease and, therefore, carries with it, the unavoidable penalty of death.

Ezekiel 18. 4 says, The soul that sinneth it shall die

Romans 5. 12 reads, By one man sin entered into the world and death is the result.

Romans 6. 23 states, The wages of sin is death

We must ask, What is sin?

Collecting all the main definitions of sin in the Bible we discover that sin is

1. missing the mark
2. to be lacking ... falling short
3. transgression, violation of God's law and commands or duty to Him
4. rebellion against God
5. refusal to obey God's will and authority
6. iniquity gross immorality, injustice or weakness
7. perversion altering God's will
8. crookedness
9. distortion changing God's will and purpose deviating from the truth
10. disobeying God

To summarise, sin is threefold.....that is to say failure to met God's requirements, resistance and disobedience to God, and a wrong attitude and a wrong personal state.

It is often forgotten that all sin is against God. David in Psalm 51 says, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." Indeed, he had sinned with Bathsheba and against her husband Uriah but had his heart been right before God he would not have outraged a beautiful woman and contrived her husband's death.

All sin is a failure to met God's requirements and all sin begins with a wrong personal state and a wrong attitude to God. Sin separates us from God who is Pure and cannot look at sin.

What does sin do to the individual?

It separates us from God. And we are all sinners. Romans 3.23 says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

When we sin, God cannot look at us because of our sin. We cannot come into His Presence. Sin produces guilt because we have a conscience and an inbred knowledge of what is basically right and wrong. It can produce fear. The warning of Christ in John 8.24 is very telling, "Unless ye believe in Me, ye shall die in your sins." If we commit a crime and are caught by the Police we have to face the law. So it is with God. Romans 14.12 states that we all have to account to God and the anonymous writer to the Hebrews says in chapter 9.27, "It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgement." Hebrews 10.31 is more direct since it says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Sin, therefore, produces God's anger and can result in our eternal damnation.

In God's sight, there are only two types of people.....the saved and the lost. Put other ways the commended and the condemned, those for Heaven's glory and those for Hell's torment.

Sin produces hopelessness as it says in Ephesians 2.12, "Without Christ... without hope."

It depraves and disfigures. It ruins the life and, unless resolved, it will lead to God not accepting such a sinner and their being eternally lost.

What does sin do ultimately?

After death we see that we have to face God in His court of assessment. Physical death is not the only death. There are two deaths mentioned in the Bible... firstly, when the body dies which we call physical death when one is buried or cremated but there is the second death. Revelation 20 .4 speaks of spiritual death. The soul that sinneth it shall die.

Those who physically die with Christ as their Saviour are saved. Those that die without Christ as saviour, are to be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 10.28 speaks of such bodies and souls in Hell. Here is no comparison with earthly misery, Suicide may end human distress but there is no such suicide in Hell. Hell is not only torment but separation from God.

If the wretched problem of sin can be resolved in this life then we can be reconciled to God and not separated from Him.

Who can be saved?

This is the question the disciples asked the Lord in Matthew 19.25.

The answer is that salvation is possible to all. John 3.16 reads, "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that WHOSOEVER believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 1. 12 reads, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become sons of God."

Consider Acts 2.21, "WHOSOEVER shall call on the Name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved."

Then there is Luke 12. 8. "WHOSOEVER confesses the Saviour before men, the Saviour shall so confess in Heaven."

There are many other verses such as John 4.14, Acts 10. 43, Romans 10. 13 and 1 John 5. 1.

Not only is salvation possible to all but, secondly, God's Will is that all be saved. 2 Peter 3. 9 reads,

“The Lord is not willing that any should perish.” Indeed, “He delights not in the death of the wicked.”

Thirdly, there is a great surprise. God sees the worth of man. Remember man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1.26). God sent His Son to seek and save the lost. If he did not see the worth of man He would not have done this. God has revealed Himself in Christ. He wants us to know Him. God gave dominion to man. God gave man laws. God has given us intelligence and freewill. We are not robots. We can choose. So it is that we can choose to accept God’s salvation in Christ.

God sees the worth of man and loves him and has given man the opportunity of eternal life.

We may have a limited opinion of self but, remember, God sent His Son to die for us. God did not spare His Son but gave Him up and into the hands of wicked men and for our salvation.

Let us think about God’s grace.

God’s provision for us is His grace. Salvation is the result of God’s grace.

Ephesians 2. 8 reads, “By grace are ye saved.”

Titus 2.11 reads, “The grace of God brings salvation.”

Sadly, there are a lot of incorrect ideas about grace. It is not a word exclusive to the New Testament.

Grace has four Old Testament words

AHEB Love. God saves His people because He loves them, Deuteronomy 23.5

CHANAN Favour. Lord, remember me with Thy favour, Psalm 106.4

CHESED Mercy. Shewing mercy unto those that love Me, Exodus 20.6. The word can also be translated kindness, goodness and steadfast love.

RATSON acceptable and pleasing. How can you not read Micah 6. 15-19 Who is a pardoning God like Thee that pardoneth iniquity. He retaineth not His anger for ever. He will turn again. He will have compassion upon us.

In the New Testament the word for grace is CHARIS. It is a word that identifies with the four Old Testament words.

The word charismatic has created great problems. It is used to describe Pentecostal and charismatic believers who teach the second blessing is the baptism in/with/ of the Holy Spirit accompanied by the gift of tongues which constitutes the Full Gospel.

Grace or charis is not something instituted by the Holy Spirit for New Testament times and future times.

But grace with truth came by Jesus Christ in the sense that this provision of grace came to save sinners.

Nobody can become a Christian unless they received God’s provision of grace. John makes it clear that when you become a Christian you receive the Holy Spirit. Conversion is being baptised in/of/ with the Holy Spirit.

You receive the Holy Spirit on conversion. In fact it would be right to say that the Holy Spirit was working with the person before that person is converted.

We need God's grace because we need God's salvation. We need to be saved and have eternal life.

Our salvation is not of works or our good deeds. Lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2. 8). Our salvation is exclusively down to the Sovereign Grace of God. 1 Peter 5. 10 reads, "He is the God of grace who has called us into eternal glory by Christ Jesus."

Look at Ephesians chapters 1 and 2

The grace of God is the finished work of Christ which forgives the sinner (1. 7)

The grace of God is likened to a fountain of spiritual blessings (1.3)

The extent of God's grace is in the exceeding riches of His grace (2.7)

The grace of God brings us near to Him (2.13)

But our salvation is not just being saved but being justified. Just as I had not sinned is a simple definition.

When I am saved, I still sin but I can come to the Lord Jesus and He is faithful and just to forgive me those sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness (1 John 1.9). I am justified freely by His grace. I am accounted to be righteous but I am not made righteous. The Lord said, "There is none righteous."

In being saved I am to put on Christ (Galatians 3.27). I am to be in Him. In Him is no sin. Having Christ upon me or in me, God sees His Son and is satisfied.

Romans 8.1 reads, "There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Luke 12 tells of a man of some wealth who had building projects and enjoying the pleasures of life. He had an easy life and ate, drank and was merry. But that night he died. He had everything in this life but he was not saved.

Isaiah 55. 6 gives a warning, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call upon Him while He is near."

We do not know how long we have in this life and so many add to this verse "tomorrow may be too late." While we do not wish to be guilty of scaremongery but that could be true.

(1774)

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